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The Collapse of Spirituality and the Search For New Meanings in the Age of AI.
The Role of Anthropology and Its Branches

Abstract: *This opinion piece explores the necessity of reconsidering crucial anthropological categories, primarily the meaning of human existence, in the context of the potentially harmful effects of technological progress, especially AI, on the human soul and spirituality. It reflects on the need to find new meanings or redefine existing ones. This endeavor invokes the discipline most responsible for the condition and destiny of humanity on Earth, anthropology, with its main branches: philosophical anthropology, social anthropology, educational anthropology, cultural anthropology, labor anthropology, and political anthropology.*

Keywords: *human soul; human existence; technological progress; artificial intelligence; spirituality; anthropology; philosophical anthropology; social anthropology; educational anthropology; human destiny.*

Introduction

The famous maxim attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things," has been and continues to be invoked to highlight the centrality of humans in the world, in relation to nature, univers and the environment. Following this saying, which has significant anthropo-philosophical implications, the question arises: what is man? Primarily, philosophy and anthropology describe man as the unity of three constitutional dimensions: biological, intellectual, and spiritual. In other words, the unity of three entities: body, mind, and soul. The body is the material, biological foundation, the mind is a tool for knowledge, but the soul is the factor that provides cohesion and unity to these elements, transforming them into an authentic, profound human experience and generating centrality. Through their axiological-spiritual capacities, humans are endowed with the power to give meaning and significance to existence and to connect with the world by dominating it.

In light of this understanding, the historical analysis of the evolution of the soul and spirituality, and of the meaning of life and human existence, unfortunately leads to the conclusion that we are witnessing the beginning of a deconstruction/disintegration of the anthropo-ontological unity, linked to a process of de-spiritualization through the accelerated advancement of rationality and materiality starting from the post-feudal centuries.

On the scale of the entire evolution of humanity, if anthropogenesis consisted of the gradual, step-by-step construction of man, with the attribute of human nature (body - mind - soul), in order: the constitution of the body, the constitution of the mind, the constitution of the soul, the apex representing their reunion in the unity and balance of body-mind-soul, predominantly synchronous with the establishment and institution of great religions and cultures, the subsequent history of humanity seems to represent a reverse process, of loss and decline in the original human nature and integral meaning of human existence, which begins with the involution and decline of the human soul, followed by the decline of rationality through its surpassing by artificial intelligence, and, ultimately, by the decline of the body, and humanit,y through the replacement of biological human beings with robots.

These processes, especially the accelerated advance of artificial intelligence, have brought to the forefront of humanistic debates, related to the de-spiritualization processes, a multitude of issues and questions related to fundamental anthropological concepts such as human nature, essence, condition, and, in extension, regarding the meaning of human life and existence. Regarding this last issue, questions are oriented mainly in two directions: in the conditions of the heightened technologization of society and human existence, is there a need to change the meaning and search for/ find a new meaning/meanings, or will a reevaluation, correction be necessary?

Regarding these questions, the issue of the meaning of human life and existence brings to the forefront many other questions such as:

- Can accelerated technological progress and the technologization of society lead to a fundamental change in the way we conceive the meaning of life and human existence?
- As AI becomes increasingly autonomous and capable, is it possible that people will reevaluate their fundamental values, principles, and beliefs?
- Could collaboration between humans and technology lead to extraordinary discoveries and achievements that significantly improve the quality of human life?
- Can accelerated technological progress and the technologization of society facilitate a new understanding of the meaning of life or a correction of it based on close collaboration and cohabitation between humans and technology?
- Will there be crucial reconsiderations of the great categories and concepts related to the meaning of life and human existence, such as the purpose of life and human existence, the value of life and human existence, the issue of freedom and free will, the issues of death, faith, morality, personal happiness and fulfillment, coexistence, welfare, solidarity, etc.?

In the debates regarding the challenges to the meaning of life and human existence and the associated or subsequent categories, closely linked to the decline and involution of the human soul and spirituality, the humanities, philosophy, and anthropology have the statutory responsibilities to contribute, through their specific approaches and instruments, to identifying possible new meanings or correcting them, in

conditions where accelerated technological progress, the technologization of society, and human life will impose these reconsideration efforts as a necessity, in relation to how they have been defined throughout history.

In the present article, the focus is primarily on the role of anthropology in this endeavor, especially through its important branches such as philosophical anthropology, social anthropology, educational anthropology, and cultural anthropology, anthropology of labor and human activity, and political, juridical, and ethical anthropology.

On the Role of Philosophical Anthropology

In its "salvaging" endeavor, philosophical anthropology should, in our opinion, operate, of course in a closely correlated and unified manner with other branches and discipine, primarily in two directions: towards science, particularly towards scientific psychology, and towards technology, especially AI and robotics.

Regarding the struggle, confrontation, or collaboration with psychology, philosophical anthropology should start by supporting the fact that science (scientific psychology) has made and continues to make a significant mistake by eliminating the soul from its sphere of research and the theoretical models it uses to represent human personality and the human being as a whole. This exclusion has been largely due to its close association with religion, with the soul being perceived as an outdated object of scientific interest, much like the religion that supposedly invented it. By associating the soul with religion, science/scientific psychology "threw out the baby (the soul) with the bathwater (religion)", disregarding the fact that the soul can and should be analyzed outside of religion. There is also the argument that the soul, even if it exists as part of human personality and being, cannot be investigated by scientific methods because it does not have an observable existence. Therefore, it should not represent an object of scientific research and modeling.

Nevertheless, philosophical anthropology should point out that in psychology, there is scientific interest in other psychic/ personality entities, such as the self, consciousness, will, etc. which also cannot be directly observed, only hypothesized. These are brought into the sphere of

science/psychology and researched, even though they are essentially parascientific categories/entities, similar in nature to the soul. So why should the soul be excluded from the psychological discourse? It is just as unobservable as the other mentioned psychic entities. Its total "discriminatory" exclusion from research and debate can deprive psychology of an authentic, integral, and deeper understanding of what it truly means to be a human psychic system, a human personality, a human being, in relation to which great anthropo-philosophical categories such as the meaning of life and human existence, the human nature, essence, condition are established, and, subsequently, one of its fundamental properties: spirituality, love, interpersonal attachment.

Philosophical anthropology must argue that the human soul is undoubtedly the source and seat of our feelings towards others. Spirituality, empathy, love, and compassion – manifestations of our soul – help us create spiritual and cultural products, connect emotionally and empathetically with others, understand each other, and fully embody our humanity.

Regarding the role, involvement, confrontation, or collaboration with technology, the concerns, and searches regarding the meaning of human life and existence, in close connection with the future of the human soul and spirituality, philosophical anthropology should aim, on the one hand, to support with its own means the research, theorization, and modeling of specific, particular processes in the broad sphere of society or other domains and disciplines such as human relations, education and culture, labor, politics, justice, ethics, or knowledge. Here, philosophical anthropology could play a role of intellectual and epistemological mentor. On the other hand, it should operate, through the means, concepts, ideas, and methods specific to the discipline, in its own sphere of research and theorization, with a focus on debates, ideas, and theses concerning fundamental anthropo-philosophical categories, such as the human nature, essence, and condition, the purpose of life and human existence, the value of life and human existence, the issue of freedom and free will, the issues of death, faith, morality, personal happiness and fulfillment, coexistence, welfare, solidarity, etc., aiming at how the technologization of society affects them, as well as proposing ideas, theses, solutions with an explanatory but also applicative purpose.

Principally, the efforts of philosophical anthropology should not aim to stop the advance of technology and the invasion of human space by technology, a process that cannot be halted, but rather to seek/find, together with

other branches of anthropology, such as social anthropology, new human meanings in our existence, possibly a redefinition/correction of some.

On the Role of Social Anthropology

First of all, social anthropology is called to highlight the fact that due to the unprecedented acceleration of technologization and robotization of human societies, phenomena which, although they bring many benefits, also present many possible negative effects on everyday human life, in groups, communities and jobs. This branch of anthropology, in partnership with philosophical anthropology and other branches, is called to signal the risk of a more pronounced dehumanization of society as a whole, but especially at the level of micro-communities, families, professional organizations and, consequently, at the individual-soul level, affectively and spiritually, a gradual loss of sensitivity and empathy towards other human beings, and the inherent degradation of human relationships. In a world where communication is increasingly mediated by screens and algorithms, genuine human connections are becoming rarer and more technologically mediated.

In light of these alarming trends, the active, programmatic, and systematic involvement of social anthropology in mitigating these processes becomes increasingly evident. It is essential to actively promote socio-human values and practices that preserve and enhance the role of the human/ humanistic vision of groups, communities, organizations, and societies, alongside efforts to promote empathy, altruism, and human solidarity. There should be no exclusivism or vehement, uncritical opposition to technology, as it can also offer multiple opportunities for long-distance human communication, the formation of online groups and communities where authentic human processes can develop, and even the promotion of the values of the soul and spirituality through virtual space. Social anthropology is called to propose, promote, and recommend a balance between technological progress and respect for humanity and spirituality; among other things, by identifying "human" and "spiritual" ways of coexisting with technology.

The age of technology/AI is, therefore, a potential danger for the human person, for the quality of human relationships, but also an opportunity through the multiple communication facilities it offers. Social anthropology must and can offer ideas, concepts, theses that help in the efforts to identify solutions and build models of coexistence with technology, preserving the human dimension of communities and the authentic meaning of life and human existence through the controlled and responsible merging of the spiritual dimension with their technological one. Here, education and culture, and consequently the anthropology of education and the anthropology of culture, play an important role.

On the Role of the Anthropology of Education and Cultural Anthropology

Undoubtedly, there is a confrontation between technology and spirituality with authentic anthropo-chronological values. In this context, the task of the anthropology of education and cultural anthropology is far from easy. On one hand, they must be neutral and objective, theorizing a state of affairs, and on the other hand, as humanistic disciplines, to contribute to the preservation of humanity, they must signal the possible negative effects on the meaning of life and human existence, and accordingly, contribute with educational and cultural models to minimize the negative effects of technologization. Their specific endeavors must be intense, focused, and systematic to succeed against such powerful forces that are essentially devoid of ethics and humanity, such as technology, artificial intelligence, and the exact sciences.

The anthropology of education must investigate and propose models, methods, and curricula that consider the three major constitutional dimensions of the human being – biological, rational, and spiritual. It must remind and argue that focusing educational efforts on the spiritual, emotional, cultural, and humanitarian development of individuals in a technological society is vital, especially in a society seemingly established after the advent of artificial intelligence and robotics.

Education plays a fundamental role in this mission. The school curriculum should be designed to promote not only technical knowledge but also a

profound understanding of the spiritual and cultural aspects of human existence. Children and young people should be encouraged to explore existential questions and develop their capacity for critical and creative thinking in relation to technology. The anthropology of education should propose an education system represented as a conducive environment for the integral development of the individual, systematically and coherently including spiritual and cultural dimensions. It is also the role of the anthropology of education to remind and argue forcefully for this aspect.

In parallel with the efforts of the anthropology of education, in the cultural domain, cultural anthropology efforts must contribute through axiological models to help mitigate the negative effects of accelerated and uncontrolled technologization on human life and activity as established by the usual definitions of important anthropo-philosophical categories such as the meaning of life and human existence, nature, existence, and the human condition, primarily based on the value category of spirituality.

Beyond the corresponding argumentative theory, cultural anthropology must highlight the importance of the active involvement of cultural institutions in processes and social phenomena involving technologization. In the context of the unbridled pressure and invasion of technology in human society, theaters, museums, libraries, and other similar institutions must become spaces where individuals are exposed to authentic human and spiritual culturalization, to the diversity of cultures and artistic expressions. People must be encouraged to reflect on their own cultural and spiritual identity, to be proud of it, and to develop and promote it.

Similarly, cultural anthropology must investigate, theorize, and recommend the use of the facilities provided by technology, artificial intelligence, and robotics for cultural development through spirituality and humanity of communities. Easy and widespread access, even globally, to the dissemination of great musical, literary, theatrical works, etc., with their humanizing and spiritual roles, is a resource that philosophical anthropology must cultivate and promote.

On the Role of the Anthropology of Work and Human Activity

"Work made man" is an important maxim with crucial anthropo-philosophical meanings, saying a lot about the great categories and themes of the anthropology of work, in correlation with philosophical anthropology, namely the meaning of life and human existence, the human nature, essence, and condition. In an era where artificial intelligence and robotics take over much of human labor, the anthropology of work and philosophical anthropology are challenged to ask: what do these categories mean when work tends to be done not by humans but by technology, even tending towards absolute, total robotization?

If all work that ensures the necessities of human existence is done by technology, what will humans do? What will be the meaning of their life and existence?

Hence, the importance of the involvement of the anthropology of work and human activity primarily lies in exploring the impact of these changes on concepts such as work, workplace, work organization, leisure time, private life, family life, civic life, human activity in general, and ultimately, the presumed impact on the human soul and its constitutional spiritual side, as humans gradually relieve themselves from work.

From a certain perspective, this process, with its presumed negative effects on humans, can also have a positive effect, thus offering people more free time to dedicate to their passions, personal relationships, and spiritual development. The anthropology of work and human activity must, in light of these conditions, determine reflections and inquiries into how the concept of work is redefined in the new era concerning humans, with the concept of the meaning of human life/ existence and nature, in a world where technology increasingly takes over professional tasks.

The anthropology of work and human activity needs to start from the ontological-cosmological premise that in this new context, the relationship between work and personal life is fundamentally redefined. Instead of being absorbed by the daily routine of work, people can have much more time to dedicate to exploring culture, art, and spirituality. Instead of being consumed by their jobs, people can now discover and develop their passions and personal interests, unhindered and unpressured by routine or stressful tasks associated with demanding jobs.

In this new landscape of work and personal life, concepts such as virtue, love, and charity could become more relevant than ever, even in the context of a rectification of the meaning of personal and human existence. By rediscovering these values, practices, and passions, people can identify

new meanings of life and existence, deeper and more adequate as a complex being, tripartite body-mind-soul, and fulfillment through spirituality, art, love, and virtue. Of course, all these things can only unfold in communities and societies governed and regulated politically, legally, and morally, thereby involving the corresponding anthropology/ anthropologies.

On the Role of Political, Legal, and Ethical Anthropology

Without any doubt, in the efforts to preserve the great meanings, values, and humanist-spiritual practices in an era witnessing the accelerated march of technology, the involvement of political, legal, and ethical anthropology is imperatively necessary.

One of the primary mission is to support the need for redefinitions of development-centered policies, where the emphasis must be strongly placed on measures aiming at the socio-cultural and socio-moral conservation and development of society based on human/ humane value. As technology, artificial intelligence, and robotics advance at an unprecedented pace, there arises a pressing need to ensure that progress remains firmly on a "human" path, rooted in the principles, values, laws, and norms of humanism and spirituality. Even the unity of humanity and society hangs in the balance as we advance into the so-called AI era.

People are often enthralled and amazed by the promises of technological progress, forgetting that humanity's history of thousands of years has been guided and grounded by spirituality and morality. In these conditions, facing such a temptation, political anthropology must remain resolute in the investigatory and theoretical endeavors aimed at theorizing and promoting the objective of conserving the original sense of what it means to be a human society, populated by people with bodies, minds, and souls. However, for this to happen, political, legal, and ethical actions are necessary, where political, legal, and ethical anthropology must be involved with ideas, concepts, theses, proposals, and models.

The political, legal, and ethical levels must recognize the inherent dangers of uncontrolled technologization and its potential to erode even the societal unity of our humanity. The danger of an "anthropo-cosmological rupture" should not be underestimated, with the emergence and establishment of two "humanities," corresponding to even two species: one archaic, traditional, conservative, refractory to technological progress, the other super-technologized, based on artificial intelligence, robotized, de-spiritualized, dehumanized.

In the face of these potential dangers, political anthropology, associated with legal anthropology and ethical anthropology, must advocate for responsibility and political, legal, and ethical models centered on humanity and the cosmological unity of humanity. This is based on the premise that as we enter a new era, we must remember that man's greatest power lies not in technological abilities but in the capacities of the soul and human spirituality to sustain and generate humanity, culture, civilization, ethics, and legality.

Political, legal and ethical anthropology, in connection with philosophical anthropology, must affirm and promote the central ideas that define the human, cultural and spiritual essence of human society through the great well-known categories such as the meaning of human life and existence, the human nature, essence, and condition. First of all, it is necessary to provide models for their conservation, change or rectification with the condition of maintaining the unity of man and society under the sign of spirituality and culture, ensuring that humanity's path to the future is not marked by an anthropo-cosmological rupture, but of a firm commitment to the values, principles and norms that make us truly human under the cosmological sign of spirituality, unity and continuity.

In **conclusion**, in its struggle with science, scientific psychology, and the ”confrontation” with technology, in the search for/finding new meanings of human life and existence, or their rectification, anthropology in its entirety, and through its branches, can and must contribute with a critical and constructive reaction even to slowing down the uncontrolled and chaotic process of technologization, cybernation, and robotization of society, simultaneously with slowing down the general process of dehumanization and deculturalization through despiritualization. However, its most significant task should be to develop and offer ideas, concepts, theses, models of personality, society, culture, education, work, politics,

justice, ethics, etc., to adapt to the changes that technology inherently and inexorably brings to society and human life. This ensures that, for as long as possible, man as a three-dimensional being – body, mind, soul – can still be considered, recalling the well-known maxim of the ancient philosopher Protagoras, "the measure of all things."

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